

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9937

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 0871

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BALAGUER CALLS FOR LEGALIZATION OF
DOMINICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 0869

1. IN HIS FEBRUARY 27 INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH (REFTEL),
PRESIDENT BALAGUER INDICATED HE WAS SUBMITTING A BILL TO
THE NATIONAL CONGRESS CALLING FOR THE LEGALIZATION OF THE
DOMINICAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PARTIDO COMUNISTA DOMINICANO,
PRD). IN EXPLAINING HIS ACTION, BALAGUER SAID THAT THE
OCTOBER 8, 1963, LAW WHICH PROHIBITS COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES
IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WAS "HEALTHY" FOR THE COUNTRY
BUT THAT CIRCUMSTANCES HAD CHANGED AND, WITH THE RETURN
OF RELATIVE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL TRANQUILITY, THE TIME
HAD NOW COME TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GROUPS OF EXTREMIST
TERRORISTS AND COMMON CRIMINALS ON THE ONE HAND AND THOSE WHO
SINCERELY ADHERED TO MARXIST-LENINIST DOCTRINES, BALAGUER ADDED
THAT THE PCD WAS LARGELY COMPOSED OF "YOUNG INTELLECTUALS
WHO PROFESS MARXIST-LENINIST IDEAS" BUT WHO HAVE NOT UP
TO THIS MOMENT CARRIED ON ACTIVITIES PROHIBITED TO
POLITICAL GROUPS UNDER THE DOMINICAN CONSTITUTION.

2. BALAGUER ALSO NOTED THAT HIS PROPOSAL SPECIFICALLY
EXCLUDED ALL THOSE LEFTIST POLITICAL GROUPS, ASSOCIATIONS
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OR FACTIONS WHICH WERE OBVIOUSLY DEDICATED TO SUBVERSION

OR TERRORISM. NONETHELESS, HE CONCLUDED, THE GODR HOPED THAT THE BILL COULD BE EVENTUALLY EXTENDED TO ALL DOMINICAN COMMUNIST PARTIES WHEN THEY COULD PROVIDE CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT THEY HAD ESCHEWED VIOLENCE AND SUBVERSION.

3. COMMENT. GIVEN THE GODR'S FIRM CONTROL OVER THE CONGRESS, FEW OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE PRESIDENT'S BILL WILL EXPERIENCE ANY DIFFICULTY IN BEING ENACTED INTO LAW. BALAGUER'S INITIATIVE TENDS TO RECOGNIZE A DE FACTO SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO THE PCD WHICH HAS FOR THE PAST YEAR OR SO OPERATED FAIRLY OPENLY AND WITHOUT OFFICIAL HARASSMENT. IN FACT, THERE HAVE BEEN VARIOUS INDICATIONS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PCD AND THE GODR, EVIDENCED BY THE FORMER'S SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S AGRARIAN REFORM LAW ON ONE HAND, AND THE GOVERNMENT'S PERMITTING THE RETURN OF PCD SECRETARY GENERAL NARCISO ISA CONDE FROM ABROAD AND THE APPOINTMENT OF VARIOUS PCD MEMBERS TO GOVERNMENT JOS. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, THE PRESIDENT'S ACTION SHOULD FURTHER HELP DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE "MODERATE" PCD AND THE MORE VIOLENCE ORIENTED EXTREMIST GROUPS ON THE LEFT. BALAGUER WAS ALSO PROBABLY MOTIVATED IN THIS REGARD BY HIS DESIRE TO POLISH HIS POLITICAL IMAGE AS A "PROGRESSIVE." COMING IN THE WAKE OF THE NEW U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT BALAGUER CALCULATED THAT THIS MOVE WOULD NOT PARTICULARLY ANTAGONIZE THE USG.
HURWITCH

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